Monksdene, 2 Northwick Park Rd
Harrow Middlesex, England.
Wednesday January 6th

IN EPIPHANIA DOMINI MCMLXV
autem Celtice Gŵyl Ystwyll

Dearest Rene

Many thanks for yr letter which came this morning. Interesting, is it not, that in Welsh the Feast of the Epiphany is Gŵyl Ystwyll or just Ystwyll. Gŵyl is the word always used for Feast or Festival yet it means Vigil and comes direct from Lat. Vigilia. And the Welsh for 'star' is seren, even in the 16th Cent. trans. of the Gospel bit about the Magi, the word used of the star is seren and so it is in the early medieval Chronicles of the Princes redacted about 1300, yet ystwyll comes direct from stella that is known for certain. So gŵyl ystwyll = vigilia + stella. I wonder ① what the Epiphany is called in Irish, either Old Irish or Modern Irish, and ② what are the Irish words for 'Feast' & for 'star'.

Perhaps the gŵyl from vigilia & coming to mean 'feast' is a bit like that mix up over feriae & festus, I mean that we call ferial days those that have no feast, but apparently in Roman antiquity they were holidays & actually have the same root, fearfully odd.

So you have heard from Tony Stoneburner. He has been in communication with me for, well, I suppose, four or five years on & off, can't remember. He sounds a jolly nice chap. Most astonishing amount of stuff he knows. I took it for granted that he was a Catholic because of the things he's said about The Anathemata for one thing. But he told me in a recent letter that he was a Methodist minister and that he had mentioned it in an earlier letter some years back which I had evidently not taken in. ~~He~~ He knows an awful lot about biblical textual criticism & seems to have read everything from Irenaeus the 2nd Cent. Xtian from Asia Minor who became a bishop in Gaul, to old Teilhard de Chardin. But he sounds terribly nice & writes most sweet letters. When these chaps across "Brendan's hearing pool" get down to tackling stuff, my God, they do it thoroughly. He's doing some special thing a thesis or something on The Anathemata because I had a letter a week back (or so), saying that if I did not hear from him for the next few months (perhaps) would not be that he had forgotten me but ~~that~~ that it was, though not explicitly forbidden, not considered right by the authorities that ~~the~~ a chap should write to the author of a work about the work while he is engaged on a thesis on the work. It's most odd isn't it that the old Ana. should be receiving this attention in the U.S. at least in academic etc. circles. It's very encouraging, or should be, considering that most chaps here find it ~~[illegible]~~ such hard going. I even feel it my duty to tell the publisher

I may say the effect, from a Catholic standpoint, of the 'vernacularism' is disastrous in Wales because, though the Catholic religion has been regarded with much prejudice by the Welsh Nonconformist mind, the Church was never regarded (as was the C. of E.) as an anglicising influence – the Latin tongue was neutral, but now that English is being used, (it being the 'vernacular' of the majority) the situation is changed. True there is some sorry provision being made for Welsh vernacular, but it will operate in very few places.

P.S. Once again ~~[illegible]~~ forgive rubbish, hiatuses, misspellings etc. Not read this ghastly rigmarole through. — must get it posted

②

~~Chilmark Press~~ of the American edtn that feared he would lose money if he published it as it would never sell in the U.S. judging from what has happened here. Well, it has not sold much ~~[illegible]~~ of course, but there has been this interest in it. I have to answer oceans of letters about it from different chaps. The Fathers of the Society of Jesus have seminars etc about it at a place called Shrub Oak, New York state, but Tony Stoneburner has been on it long before it was published in the U.S. Don't laugh ~~[illegible]~~ so as to burst your self, but were you reading for a degree in Eng. Litt. at the Univ. of Connecticut, I.p. & The Ana. would be compulsory reading – 'set books' as we used say. I think it is all largely due to Louis Cowan the owner of Chilmark Press, for he sent me a list of all the educational establishments in the U.S. to which he had sent notices of the Ana. etc. They really do all they can to get the stuff to the people they think might be interested. Can you imagine a publisher doing that sort of thing here? I don't know, I suppose the whole set-up is different – so that the 'efficiency' that we don't at all like in other connections works also in matters that one chances to have an interest in. & I suppose ample money, such as no longer exists here has something to do with it. It's a bit like an enormous extension, ~~[illegible]~~ under modern conditions, of how, in the 18th & indeed 19th Cent. books that could never possibly have been published by ordinary publishers & printers, ~~[illegible]~~ were published ~~[illegible]~~ owing to subscriptions from the nobility & gentry etc. the boys with the cash.* You know the ~~sort~~ sort of thing I mean. ~~I have a two vol. calf bound edtn of Pennant's Tour in Wales, [illegible] 1784, given me years back by Barbara Moray, with a list of subscribers at the back~~ I have the 1st Eng. edtn of the first Eng. trans. of Geoffrey of Monmouth, published in 1718 & the list of subscribers runs to ~~[illegible]~~ thirteen pages, ~~[illegible]~~ in alphabetical order, 'A' begins with the Earl of Burlington 'B' with His Grace the Duke of St Albans, ~~[illegible]~~ 'C' with His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, 'D' with the Duke of Devonshire & so on. – well, in a kind of way & very much mutatis mutandis, that's how things still work – to some extent.

About my bits & pieces since the Ana, so there are not enough yet to make a proper book. There is only ① The Wall, ② The Tutelar of the Place, ③ The Tribune's Visitation, ④ The Dream of Private Clitus, ⑤ The Fatigue (the last is a new one, it's been recorded, but not printed) They ~~[illegible]~~ vary a bit in length but, ~~we [illegible]~~ all put together would make only about 30 or so pages, if that. There are a couple I believe of shorter bits, but can't remember what they are – no, only one I think, never printed but I believe recorded but not used. I think it was called Kensington Mass or something like that. They are all really round & about the soldiers on the wall at Jerusalem at the time of the Passion. The Fatigue is the only one I've made here since I moved from Northwick Lodge. I had hoped to have a number of other bits down long since, but they take an appalling time to do & I've had so many things interfering with settling down & also a blank & confused mind & a sense of futility & endless correspondence, & bloody 'interviews' that mean nothing (& earn one nothing either!) that what I had hoped to get done is not done. I really want for a book about twice this ~~amount~~ amount.

They each take between 15 and ~~[illegible]~~ 20 minutes to read ~~[illegible]~~ aloud, nearer 20 minutes, but when printed they seem to occupy very little space – a few pages – I mean, ~~[illegible]~~ for example The Tutelar of the Place (which I chance to have by me) was printed in Agenda & starts on page 3 & ends on page 7. and The Dream of Pte Clitus begins on page 9 & ends on page 17. & The Fatigue is ten pages of foolscap hand-written MS. & ~~[illegible]~~ takes about 27 mins to read. It has been recorded (for Harvard Library of recordings of poetry) by the Brit. Council & Douglas C. is going to borrow it to use for the 3rd Programme.

*Ten marks to Charlie Marx.

③

Sunday 10 Jan.

Never got my letter of 7th finished now its Sunday again. As a matter of fact I did write two more sheets of stuff continuing from sheet 2, on Thursday but reading it through it was all pretty good rubbish so I tore it up. That's the worst of writing on this big paper that if one says a lot of silly things on the back side of the sheet all that one has said on the front side has to go too. That keeps on happening. The nonsense I wrote was a tedious lot of stuff about the Liturgy, vernacularisation etc which you ask about in your letter. The truth is I very shaken by it all, but whenever I think about it or write something down about it, it gets no where and I say a lot of rather angry & more or less pointless things. But to me it is like throwing away a whole heritage — for that's what it will come to in the end. It's not a matter of whether one 'knows' Latin (as you know I 'know' practically none) But it is the attitude of these clerics (as well as lay chaps) that beats me. They seem to have no pietas for the vast inheritance of the Latin liturgy. I don't understand it. It goes profoundly against all my instincts & feelings. What they are really saying is that after all the Reformers in the 16th Cent were perfectly right, the Mass etc., must be in a language 'understood of the people' — but they don't ever say, sorry, we happen to have been wrong in the West for a millennium & a half or so. For that's what it amounts to. For when in the 4th Cent. in North Africa & Northern Italy, the Greek liturgy became Latin & in the ~~the~~ Urbs herself a little later in the 7th Century, it was only a slow change from one language to another as the West ceased to be Greek-speaking, ~~&~~ they did not use hundreds of Celtic, Teutonic, etc etc. dialects & languages. For Illtud or David or Patrick or Columba Latin (& some Greek) was just as much the sacral language of the Mysteries as it was for Augustine when he came to Kent in 597. Interesting that Columba on Iona died the very year that Augustine landed in Kent. Damn, another sheet of meandering. Anyway, it's the over-night change that shakes me. Only the day before yesterday they were cracking on about "our wonderful universal liturgical tongue"* etc. Now they say that ordinary Catholics have not understood what the Mass was about — must get these translations out quick as a dish in time for Advent Sunday & so on, & so on.

I'm so glad you've seen Mick Richey. And awfully glad Rosalind has been integrated into the life of Éire. Yes, I'll give Barbara M. your message when I next see her or think I['ll] give her a phone. Yes, I expect in spite of your loving being in Ireland & that lovely peace you do feel as you say a bit in exile at times. But as a matter of fact I feel utterly in exile of late, more & more. Everybody one really knows is separated & inside me for all this 'interest' (in, e.g U.S.A.) 'art' of work etc. I feel completely isolated in some curious kind of way. It was an awful blow to me to hear of the death

I suppose, at base, it has nothing to do with religion, but is merely ~~an aspect~~ one aspect of the declension of the West. It is noticeable how, no doubt unconsciously, everything specifically Roman & ~~[illegible]~~ Western is under attack from the Latin of the Mass to Scholastic philosophy & theology, to even the sacring bell, & so everything 'Eastern', is O.K. & so can be Luther & Zwingli & all the Reformers. ~~[illegible]~~ misunderstood & Anglican hymnology is the cat's whiskers. In innumerable little or big ways one detects a positive feeling against the whole 'Roman' thing, yet as ~~[illegible]~~ it chances that for us of the West that thing was intricated from the beginning with our Xtian origins, ~~&~~ the whole of our medieval culture & post-Tridentine culture too, it makes it very hard indeed not to be thoroughly put out with the whole business. God knows, one has one's criticisms & reservations, but one manages somehow to discount them & take into account that in spite of everything one has a sense of essential, solid continuity. Take the thing of such silly things: Take the business of a central altar, well, we saw the point of that in the 1920s — but not as a mechanical cure-all that was of vital importance, but now, out of the blue, they've got some electric or motor-driven contrivance, I understand, when a mobile altar complete with baldachino is transported into the nave of Westminster Cathedral so that the ~~[illegible]~~ celebrant can face the people for 'Dialogue Masses'. There's something ridiculous about it. Especially at Westminster, where the High Altar ~~[illegible]~~ is placed for all to see, no screen ~~or~~ anything. Anyway the notion of this kind of hectic change to fit a current trend in liturgical thought seems to me ludicrous.*

* and anyway, if they must have a mensa Domini in the body of the nave, what's the matter with an ordinary table which could be carried in & out as occasion demanded. When those damned Reformers in Liza I's reign ~~[illegible]~~ abandoned for a while the chancel altar & celebrated communion in the nave they did at least have the sense to use an ordinary table covered with a linen cloth. They didn't try to have it both ways by wheeling in a baldachino as well.

(4)

of Tom Eliot. They had kept the fact of his illness very dark. At Xmas time I had a card from him & his wife Valerie. Since I had moved to Northwick Lodge I've not been taking in any newspaper. Never got round to getting a nearer newsagent to send me The Times. So if there was any indication in The Times of his illness I should not have seen it. But though I hardly ever use the radio now, I switched on by chance on the evening that he had died, for the late news bulletin, but missed it except for the last few words & heard the voice of old Auden talking about someone but did not know who until the announcer said "That was Mr Auden paying tribute to Mr T.S. Eliot who died this evening." Next day I spent most of the time trying to write a letter to his widow, which I managed somehow, but Lord! how difficult such letters are to write & how damned stupid all the words sound. I see from The Tablet that he is buried in East Coker from where his ancestors went to America in the 17th Cent.

In the mix up of my papers, I can't find yr letter, I know ~~they~~ there were other things you mention which I should answer.

Must stop & get on with some other letters.

Much love to Joan, . I hope she is alright.

God bless you René - look after yourself.

With much love from Dai.

Tom B. is coming this afternoon - its ages since I've seen him. He's kept jolly busy and been away in various places - Germany, the U.S. & so on. I look forward to seeing him.

Spoke on 'phone to dear Harman a few days ago. He finally left the B.B.C. on Dec 21st. so is in his home in Widford. I think he feels, naturally, the strange change from being incessantly hard at it in the B.B.C. & now suddenly having none of those arduous tasks & responsibilities. It must be an odd feeling. D

Poor Bert Read is ill. I don't like the sound of it. Some sort of ulcer on the tongue. He wrote me a most sweet letter a little back because he'd seen an article in The New Yorker on Epoch & Artist by a chap called Harold Rosenberg & he, Bert, was very pleased about it. Then he told me that he had expected to be going to lecture in Japan, but that this thing had developed. He made light of it, but also made pretty clear that it was some sort of malignant thing. I've heard since from his nephew, (Peter Orr, of the British Council) that it was responding well to treatment & that he, Bert, was quite vigorous & cheerful, but I don't like the sound of the bloody thing. I have now to write to him, in fact I should have done so long since. His letter to me was particularly kind. - what a word. D

The University of St Andrews want to confer on me an Honorary LL.D. on Feb. 19th. at Dundee. But owing to this infernal neurosis about going to places I had to write & say I could not come to get it. They replied that perhaps I could go at some other time as they did not confer degrees in absentia. Doesn't matter a bugger really, of course, but of all places I should have liked to get it from there, because it has very deep traditions. The University, as it now is, was founded only in the 1400's but its real name was not St Andrews, but ~~Kilyr~~ Kilrymont, damned odd mixture of Celtic & Frog. Kil- as you, of all men, know always means that an early Celtic monastic cell was on the site. In Welsh it is now spelt Cil- & there are not very many. Llan appears to have superseded it in most cases, but there is Cilcennin in the South, & Cilgwyn (very near where Valerie lives) - anyway, the kings of Scotland at some time made the place their royal residence so the word means 'the Cell of Mount royal'. Ed. I. held a parliament there when he imagined he'd conquered Scotland. & it is said, destroyed all the previous records of the place which probably went back to the 7th Century. & when I was a little boy I spat on his (Edward's) tomb in Westminster Abbey, but that was more for his conquest of Wales than anything else. They are holding the degree-giving ceremony at Dundee because there is a big hall there & not one big enough for such occasions at St Andrews on the coast.